

## Soil Mini-Activity



The Eldergrow garden offers a therapeutic connection to nature where residents engage in meaningful ways with the garden – cognitively, socially, spiritually, emotionally, physically and more.

**Summary:** Tending the soil of the garden.

### **Activity Objectives:**

Objective 1: Resident engage in sensory stimulation (SS)

Objective 2: Resident will engage cognitive skills (CS)

Objective 3: Resident will engage socialization (S)

### **Supplies:**

1. Hand rake

### **Set-Up:**

- Move garden into central location so residents can gather around it - *don't forget the brakes!*
- Gather residents for easy access & view of the garden.
- Have garden journal ready for any comments or observations.

### **Directions:**

**Step 1: Observation** (You can enter any observations into your garden journal).

As residents gather, encourage them to look at their garden.

*Q: How are the plants doing?*

### **Step 2: Soil**

- Look at the soil all around the garden.

*Q: How well watered is it?- Is the soil dry, moist or soggy?*

- Proper watering will also keep soil healthier. Soil should be slightly moist between waterings, never all dry and should not be watered to the point of being soggy. Moist soil is healthy soil!
  - Add a little water around the plants if the soil is getting dry.

- Describe the color of the soil.

Q: *Is it dark brown, light brown, reddish?*

Q: *Is the white perlite turning yellow or orange or collecting at the surface?*

- Perlite floats to the surface of soil when the soil is heavily watered (see picture below) & turns yellow-orange from some minerals in the soil drying on the surface.



- Mix & churn up the soil around the plants to mix the perlite in more & tidy the look of the soil.
- Remove any fallen leaves or flowers from the soil surface as well.
- Look around the plants, below their leaves to check the soil over their roots.
  - Make sure no roots are exposed and there are no deep pits in the soil from heavy watering. If there are, pull some soil from another area to cover and smooth out the area by the plant roots.
  - If plants weren't properly buried and are sticking up a bit out of the soil, pile some on top, or try to bury the plant deeper.

Q: *Now how does the garden look, with the soil well-tended?*

- If you find any **mushrooms** in the soil, just scoop them out with a shovel. They mean the soil has good organic material in it, but is probably watered a little too much. Remove them carefully because mushrooms can be toxic. Wash your hands if you touch them!
- If the soil is looking too heavy still with perlite, you can make a note to add more coco coir or other soil to the garden to keep the right balance of aerating amendments and nutrient/water-holding ingredients.

**Step 3: Closing:** Record in journal.

Q: What did you learn today?

Q: What was your favorite part of today's activity?

Questions? Please contact 206-283-6433 or [info@eldergrow.org](mailto:info@eldergrow.org)

